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In Support of Abstraction: Physical Interiority Beyond Postmodern Dance

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IN SUPPORT OF ABSTRACTION:

PHYSICAL INTERIORITY BEYOND POSTMODERN DANCE

by

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ABSTRACT

In Support of Abstraction: Physical Interiority Beyond Postmodern Dance

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I investigate how speculative philosophy informs critical thinking about dance and its performance, encompassing both the act of creating and the action of executing. Speculative thinking augments and draws out new experiences and realities in the artistic body. I will argue that speculative theories widen the understanding and implementation of dance and its performance through a combination of human and nonhuman forces. This broadened understanding encourages progress, transformation, and evolution within the field of dance. I discuss the human (that which is experienced through sensibilities, therefore tangible and understandable on a cognitive and practical level) and the nonhuman (forces beyond our direct control that lean on the virtual, which exists as part of our known or unknown reality but cannot yet be measured or proven). This argument concerns both art-makers and art appreciators. It also carries significant consequences for the future evolutionary development of dance and performance within the western contemporary dance field.

We must widen the function of dance and its performance by giving access to a mode of thinking that affects the body; in return, the body points to and makes accessible new possibilities. The effect and affect of these combined new realities, the known and the not yet

known but felt realities, contribute culturally, socially, and politically. This is a direct and important result of meaning-making in performance. The intra-relational outcome is what forms the performance expression and thus pushes the boundaries of creative evolution forward.

Rather than burying the living in writing or bringing the dead back to life in writing, writing

should write the dead as ghosts so that the living can come to live with them.

Patricia Clough, *The End(s) of Ethnography* (1998)

… one is born into history, one isn't born into a void.

Dionne Brand (2001)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

As a practitioner of the body within the western contemporary dance field, I have long been engaged in enhancing, widening, and deepening the understanding of the continuously moving and changing body—from its cells to its consciousness(es). This has allowed a practice of delving experientially into the body in order to attain expanded knowledge of expression. Involved is a desire to expand expressive qualities—not necessarily emotive qualities, but rather the abilities or capacities for an increased physical (human) expression, which motivates coming to an understanding of particular sensorial experiences. Various philosophical and theoretical speculations support this research, especially recent speculative philosophical thought about matter, bodies, and various technologies.

Speculative thinking invites new experiences and realities within the artistic body. I argue that speculative thinking expands the understanding and implementation of dance and its performance that combines human and nonhuman forces. Attention to the combination of human and nonhuman forces encourages progress, transformation, and evolution within the artistic field. By *human*, I mean that which is experienced through sensibilities, therefore tangible and understandable on a cognitive/practical level. I use the term *nonhuman* to refer to forces beyond our direct control that lean on the virtual, that which exists but cannot yet be measured with known metrics, but which is part of our known and unknown realities. Speculative thinking is important, as it is relevant to both art-makers and art appreciators; it also carries significant consequences for the future evolutionary development of dance and performance within the western contemporary dance field.

In what follows, I draw upon different speculative theories and thinkers in support of my claim that speculative thought is paramount for the continuation of bodily capabilities and their expansion in deciphering and relaying movements into felt sensibilities that, in turn, will make a difference and push the future of dance forward. The speculative theories are therefore critical in abstract dance and dance-making, for they put dance and its performance into a broader social and political context. Abstract dance and performance rely on the body itself for their expression; this expression does not need narrative, music, or any other external help to convey the meaning of the performance. What the body and its dance convey, reveal, and/or elude to emphasizes what lies in between—the transition, the unexplainable,, that which has no words and as an art form has much in common with the spirit of both poetry and music.

I lean on the thinking of media theorist Mark B. Hansen and affect theorist Patricia Clough. Both these theorists argue for a rethinking of logic so as to take twenty-first-century media into account within the realm of being human. Following them, I assert that within the realm of the cultural, especially with dance and its performativity, the speculative is necessary. As Hansen states in "Our Predictive Condition": "technical media are resolutely of the world: they are responsible for our contemporary implication within worldly sensibility, for our primordial sensible contact with the world, and for any resultant complexifications of the human as a form of process" (270). In *Autoaffection*, Clough "trace[s] the future of thought" in cultural criticism and other fields, explains this as "the age of the teletechnology," where the beginning of the human, the virtual, and the worldly sensibilities' entangled engagement starts.

After providing a brief historical overview of dance from the late nineteenth century to the present in order to lineate my experience and thinking on speculative theory, I will delve into the abstract differences between postmodern choreographers Trisha Brown and Yvonne Rainer

with the help of philosopher Roland Barthes's essay on artist Cy Twombly. This sets up my investigation of the speculative through Hansen's rethinking of twenty-first-century media and his "worldly sensibilities," while also leaning on Clough's theories. This will lead to a defense of abstraction within the western contemporary dance world while illuminating the idea of the primordial, prehension, and the skin as mediums of extended knowledge. Lastly I will offer insights into current choreographic and artistic exploration as examples of and hope for a futurity of western abstract dance.

While re-interpreting process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead,[1] Hansen states: "what is ultimately valuable with Whitehead's thought is how it compels us to rethink the Human as an inseparable part of a larger environmental sensory confound" (15).[2] This "larger environmental sensory confound" involves sensory systems within the human body and consciousness as well as outside of the body, connecting to the universal and environmental consciousness(es), consciousness(es) we as humans as yet cannot fully see or directly experience. Hansen proposes:

> Human experience is currently undergoing a fundamental transformation caused by the complex entanglement of humans within networks of media technologies that operate predominantly, if not almost entirely, outside the scope of human modes of awareness (consciousness, attention, sense perception, etc). I have already described and shall continue to describe this transformation as a shift in the economy between human-addressed media and twenty-first-century media. (By human-addressed media, I mean media that correlate *directly* to human modes of sensory experience and cognitive-

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[1] Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and his speculative philosophy, particularly as found in *Process and Realities*, have gained increasing interest and relevance today. In reinterpreting his theories, Hansen implements a new shift in thought.

[2] Regarding larger environmental confound, Hansen states: "[o]n Whitehead's neutral theory of experience. The human no longer stands against everything else; rather exactly like everything else, each human being is a particular organization or composition of actual entities" (15).

processing; by twenty-first century media, though of course this remains to be demonstrated, I mean media that are only *indirectly* correlated to human modes of experience, or, to put it in the more precise conceptual framing I shall develop more fully below, media that involve technical operations to which humans lack any direct access.) The idea, then, is that human experience is undergoing change caused by our entanglement within contemporary media environments, and that the directionality of this transformation inverts the longstanding privilege held by humans as the well-nigh unique addressee of media. . . . I want to suggest that today's media indispensably involve human experience, but that the avenue of their impact on human experience and of their implication of humans within their operationality, has shifted from a direct to an indirect modality. Put otherwise, I want to claim that media impact the general sensibility of the world prior to and as a condition for impacting human experience. (5-6)

Within this thesis, my aim is to uncover the need for dance and its performance based on this reconfiguration of humanity. In *Notes on Psychoanalysis and Technology, the Psyche and the Social*, Clough aptly explains: "[T]hinking is being opened to other-than-human agencies, deprivileging the human subject while placing humans in a larger environment of affective forces—calling for reformulating the human mind and the body, as well as their synthesis as the ground and figure of experience" (7).

This shift in thought, I will argue, needs to be applied to the performative field. Twenty-first-century media theories are especially pivotal for the progress of dance and its performance on cultural, political, social, and economic levels.

SELECTED HISTORICAL REFERENCE IN ABSTRACT DANCE

There is something distinctive about the corporeal—the body as a site for the production of art. It produces different kinds of knowledge and politics. The embodied knowledge continually develops and expands; it is a type of knowledge one can only receive through practice. It matters that practice occurs. A full understanding of embodied knowledge requires knowing what that practice consists of. Thus it matters what and how one is thinking or theorizing as a practitioner.

In order to lineate the development of abstraction within dance and its performance, let us take up a brief history of western modern dance beginning with its theatrical lineage, where dance was always either accompanied by music or related to a narrative story. We might start with the American Isadora Duncan (1877-1927),[3] with her interest in Greek mythology, her bare legs and bare feet dancing in fluid emotional response to music. We now interpret her dancing as a free spirit of "just moving." However, without having seen this mother of modern dance in person, there is no telling really how theatrical she was. The German choreographer Mary Wigman (1886-1973)[4] was the first to insist that dance was an art form in itself and needed neither music nor narrative to accompany the movement. Even so, Wigman was theatrical in her emotional outpouring and known for pioneering expressionist dance. Both Duncan and Wigman had political and social impacts. Duncan supported the revolution in Russia and created dances to encourage resistance, and Wigman was supported by the Nazi regime and created big spectacle events within the fascist agenda, although she later denied her involvement.

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[3] See Duncan.
[4] See Manning.

Then there is the groundbreaking shift that the modern American choreographer Martha

Graham (1894-1991)[5] accomplished with her conviction that dance is an art form rather than

entertainment. She followed the footsteps of previous dance pioneers in developing her modern

dance technique, using teaching as a tool to secure and develop futurity for dance and promote

dance as a language. Her choreographies used inner psychological twists to reshape and expand

technical ability to express deep emotional contours and different aspects of dance narrative.

Political theorist Randy Martin assesses Graham's contribution to dance history: "From this

unfathomable well of creativity will issue the self that is made by making art, a secular

transcendence couched as a universalism. In Graham technique, this wellspring is the

contraction, a mainline to the archetypes lodged in the unconscious strata of species or blood

memory" ("A Precarious Dance," 70-71). In contrast to Graham, albeit with dance experience as

one of her dance company's leading men, Merce Cunningham (1919-2009)[6] completely changed

how dance was perceived. His contemporary dance technique and conceptual thinking reshaped

the dance-world at large.

Cunningham and his partner, the composer John Cage, paved the way for contemporary

dance-making that still influences dance and performance today. Through experimentation and

research, with an emphasis on space, time, and technology, Cunningham's choreographies

initiated chance[7] as a vehicle for creative solutions in collaboration with contemporary visual

artists and composers (Vaughan, 276). Cunningham became the first contemporary abstract

choreographer. As an interdisciplinary duo, Cunningham and Cage set minds rolling and opened

doors that many did not know existed in the first place. Cunningham's technique utilized the

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[5] See Graham.
[6] See Merce Cunningham Trust website.
[7] Cunningham states that the chance method "led, and continuous to lead to new discoveries. . . . I
continue to utilize chance operations in my work, finding with each dance new ways of experiencing it"
(Vaughan, 276).

physical body as a whole. He emphasized vertical movement more than Graham, although both used what we would call codified techniques. This means, the learned class-movements are intended to be used in the choreography, very similar to the way in which technique is practiced and used within the classical ballet.

If Graham's dance was psychological, Cunningham's was form and time-based. His interest laid in time, space, place, and *facings* where the body became one visual form in relation to other visual forms, creating a living composition of "pure" dance; the collected movements in time and space conveyed unique artistic expressions. Dance archivist David Vaughan explains:

> Other conventional elements of dance structure were also abandoned: conflict and resolution, cause and effect, climax and anti-climax. It goes without saying that Cunningham has not been interested in retelling stories or exploring psychological relationships: the subject matter of his dances is the dance itself. This does not mean that drama is absent, but it is not drama in the sense of narrative—rather, it arises from the intensity of the kinetic and theatrical experience, and the human situation on stage. (Vaughan, 7)

The Cunningham body, with its spirals, tilts, and curves (clearly influenced by Graham's teachings), existed by way of juxtaposition and allowed personal interpretations both as audience and performer. The combination of facings and space within each time-moment made for an extraordinary dramatic experience, where audiences were often taken, euphorically, to another dimension.

The postmodern choreographer Trisha Brown (1936-2017),[8] took the abstract body movement into a non-codified territory of expression, into a language in itself. Bringing her

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[8] See Rosenberg and Teischer.

improvisational experience with San Francisco-based Anna Halprin (1920-),[9] together with her formal dance training and her leaning towards Cunningham/Cage concepts, Brown created a new realm. The postmodern insistence that all movements are dance, described as "quotidian is excellence,"no matter how everyday they are, pioneered by the Judson Dance Theater informed a political revolt against the concert stage (Martin, *Knowledge LTD*, 168-177). Art curator Klaus Kertess explains: "While Cunningham's improvisations were based on invented movements, Brown, Rainer, and the younger dancers structured seamless non sequiturs made up of recognizable, task oriented movements—walking, running, falling, etc. They created non-narrative fields of energy engaging each viewer directly in her physical space" (72-73). Brown found, especially in Cage's lectures on impermanence, a refuge that granted permission to experiment and to research utilizing a methodology of concept, instinct, and action. Her work as a postmodern choreographer took the ordinary into the extraordinary. As a master improviser, she captured instinctive movements, thus creating a new dance language that was a combination of thought, action, and instinct and that which also lies beyond instinct, forming movements particular to that very expression.

Each of these minds were part of their respective eras in their questioning, speculating, protesting, dreaming and hoping. Brown, influenced by New York's downtown art scene in the 1960s, and close to the visual art's ways of thinking, experimented with her peers within the art and performance field while performing in alternative spaces, galleries, and museums. This positioned Brown within the visual arts community, but alienated her from the more traditional concert dance, in regards to makers, audience and funders.

Frederic Jameson states, regarding the advancement and influence of history, the idea "that the structure of the psyche is historic, and has a history, is, however, as difficult for us to

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[9] See Halprin, *Moving Towards Life*.

grasp as the senses are not themselves natural organ but rather the results of a long process of differentiation even within human history" (198, 62). Cunningham exemplified this as the lead dancer with the Martha Graham Company. He carried Graham's personal emotional and dark psychological dances in his back pocket, as he moved into abstraction in terms of his psyche and his social environment. Jameson expresses the shift that occurred in dance during that time, writing that "we can think abstractly about the world only to the degree to which the world itself has already become abstract" (66). The abstract and non-abstract narrative lives and is embodied simultaneously.

Although Brown experimented and researched from the 1960s on as part of the broader postmodern art movement in New York City, collaborating with now well-known artists and invited to participate in the gallery and museum scenes, it was not until 1979 that Brown took the step to transfer her ideas to the concert stage. Not only did Brown invent anew how movement-making in itself occurred, she also brought about radical change in how to think and realize dance-works through co-creating with her dancers using tasks, words, and instructions or copying of a targeted improvised moment. Brown pushed body boundaries and invented new ways of seeing and experiencing dance. Brown writes:

> I love the give and take between ideas and physical enactment with instinct sorting out the problems along the way. The body solves problems before the mind knows you have one. I love thinking on my feet, wind in my face, the edge, uncanny timing, and the ineffable. (289-293)

Brown's work methods in movement inventions enlivened and encouraged dance-making into discovering new sensations and expression that reached beyond the accepted norm of the day. Manifested in Brown's abstract narrative or narrative abstraction, her mixture of the personal and

the public, manifested in Brown's abstract narrative, or narrative abstraction, changed and made visible a kinesthetic organic something that was in dialogue with more than just the conceptual and thinking mind. The filmmaker and choreographer Yvonne Rainer recollects Brown uttering while making her groundbreaking *Watermotor* solo (1974) that "my Father died between this and this move. . . . I was amazed my body had stored this memory in the movement pattern,"(Rainer, "A Fond Memoir, 52"). Kertess writes, "letting the body tell the story, not the story tell the body" when he discusses Brown as artist. (*Trisha Brown, Danse, précis de liberté*, 128). Through dancing, through action, the body thus informed the senses and reprogrammed the mind.

Through her personal movement style and nonconventional choreographies Brown politicized dance with a nonpolitical intention: she democratized the use of the body and the method of creating dances, meaning for example that she attributed equal use and importance between arms and legs. Creating and recreating the movement from a moment reinforces a sensibility in the dancer, thus pushing unknown boundaries into the known; discovering new movement formations and with that, new overall sensations that reinforces a sensibility in the dancer. As a performer, dancing within Brown's creations, there is within one-self a sense of erasure of self in order to connect to a different larger self, to transcend something, and touch that which could not be explained. Even though Rainer and Brown were colleagues and friends in New York's downtown scene, their uses of the body and the nonnarrative expression were very different.

Every body gesture carries its own image and history—personalized in each viewer—in each viewer's history and experiences. Rainer's use of gestures were representational even while they were abstracted. Her gestural body symbols filled themselves with history even though

Rainer claimed that a gesture is no more or less than a gesture; still each movement and each gesture meant more than what was visible.[10] Roland Barthes describes the painterly gesture:

> TW [Cy Twombly] has his own way of saying that the essence of the writing is neither a form or usage but only a gesture, the gesture which produces it by *permitting it to linge*r: a blur, almost a blotch, a negligence. . . . The essence of an object has some relation with its destruction: not necessarily what remains after it has been used up, but what is thrown away as being of no use. (158-159)

This notion of a sameness between Barthes's insight into Twombly and that of experiencing dance seems to come from a felt and lingering, a distance notion that arises in regard to Brown and Rainer's different abstractions.

Barthes writes that Twombly's painterly graphics are "decipherable but not interpretable . . . [T]he strokes themselves may well be specific, discontinuous, even so, their function is to restore *vagueness . . .* the vague is alive" (160). Similarly, I argue that Rainer's movement choices are not always interpretable, but there is a sense of importance. There might not be the same kind of vagueness here that Barthes is speaking of—that vagueness is more prominent in Brown's work—but there is an interpretational aspect here that connects to social and political issues. Barthes further implies that Twombly "retains the gesture not the product" (160) and insists that "what is shown is a gesture." This forces Barthes to ask and answer the question what a gesture is:

> What is gesture? Something like the surplus of an action. The action is transitive, it seeks only to provoke an object, a result; the gesture is the indeterminate and inexhaustible total of reasons, pulsations, indolences which surround the action with an atmosphere (in the

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[10] Rainer and Judson claimed that "The postmodern dance is most commonly figured as a turn to the pedestrian, away from rarified movement that only geniuses can create and only great critics can validate" (Martin, *Knowledge LTD*, 215, 166). See also Rainer's "No Manifesto."

astronomical sense of the word). Hence, let us distinguish the message, which seeks to produce information, and the sign, which seeks to produce an intellection, from the gesture, which produces all the rest (the "surplus") without necessarily seeking to produce anything. The artist (let us retain this somewhat kitsch term) is by status an "operator" of gestures: he seeks to produce an effect and at the same time seeks no such thing; the effects he produces he has not obligatorily sought out; they are reversed, inadvertent effects which turn back upon him and thereupon provoke certain modifications, deviations, mitigations of the line, the stroke. (160)

Even though I am not sure if Rainer's message might not correspond with " without necessarily seeking to produce anything,"it still rings true of her method and artistic desire. Brown's world definitely creates " a surplus . . . which seeks to produce an intellection from the gesture." Even though Brown's gesture is flowing and less decipherable than Rainer's, both artists are the "operator(s)" of their choreographies. And Barthes continues:

Thus in Gesture is abolished the distinction between cause and effect, motivation and goal, expression and persuasion. The artist's gesture—or the artist as gesture—does not break the causative chain of actions, what the Buddhist calls karma (the artist is not a saint, an ascetic), but he blurs, confuses it, he starts up again until it loses its meaning. In (Japanese) Zen, this sudden (and sometimes very tenuous) break in our causal logic (I am simplifying) is called Satori: by some tiny, even ridiculous, aberrant, preposterous circumstance, the subject wakens to a radical negativity (which is no longer a negation). (160-161)

Within Rainer's work, I can decipher the gesture(s) as separate; both distinctive and recognizable as different entities that forms into a statement. While, in Brown's

work, gesture(s) flow together into writing, into music, and script where the *satoris*[11] that

Barthes emphasizes are part of a dance web and language. With Brown, one often

wonders where the beginning or end of a certain movement takes place. When in fact,

most often, the beginning of a movement is the actual end of the previous one even if it is

not visible at all times, and the end is therefore the new beginning. One cannot pinpoint

the actual microsecond it takes place. It's how Brown's movements are combined that

make the notion of the whole. The in between—the transitions— are as important as the

movements and positions they frame.

Barthes writes about Twombly's "blank canvas" upon which Twombly's writing "pushes

forward" as it is produced or "lived." Similarly, in dance, the air (and floor) replaces the paper.

The paper, then, contains both the written movements and their negative space. Through the

movements, and the not seen movement, the air becomes charged and has its own life. It is when

you move (and move away from), you automatically leave an imprint, in and through the air, that

still lingers (how long is an uncertain duration). Perhaps the context, the different places, spaces

and floors, - with their textures - becomes the choreographer's paper where the dance adheres to

itself, and gets new life, pushing itself forward as it physically erases itself. Barthes continues to

describe how Twombly's gestures contain both "inscriptions and erasures,," which I find in

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[11]*Satori* means "sudden enlightenment." It is a Japanese Buddhist term for awakening, "comprehension; understanding" (*Webster's Dictionary*). Barthes adds that "[t]his word has been most inadequately translated (because of our Christian tradition) as illumination; sometimes, a little better, as awakening; insofar as outsiders like ourselves can imagine, a kind of mental shock which grants access, regardless of all known intellectual means, to Buddhist truth: an empty truth, unconnected to with forms and causalities. What matters for us is that Zen *satori* is sought with the help of technique and surprise: not only irrational, but also, and especially, incongruous techniques, flouting the seriousness we attach to religious experiences: sometimes this will be a nonsense answer to some lofty metaphysical question, sometimes a surprise gesture which violates the solemnity of a ritual (as in the case of that Zen master who stopped in the middle of the speech, took off his sandal, put it on his head, and left the room). Such essentially disrespectful incongruities are likely to unsettle the spirit of seriousness, which often lends its mask to the good conscience of our mental habits. Exclusive of any religious perspective (obviously), certain canvases by Twombly contain such impertinences, such shocks, such minor *satori*" (188).

particular, corresponds to Brown's choreographed movement language. Barthes writes that,

"TW's [Twombly's] work seems to be conjugated in the past tense or in the future, never really

in the present: one might say that there is never anything but memory, the anticipation of the

stroke: on paper—on account of the paper—the tense is perpetually uncertain" (167, 169).

Rainer's work is set in the present but in reality deals with the past, built on past notions

of carefully constructed thought patterns and methodologies that affirm in order to critique or

expand that which was. Even though I see and feel Rainer's work in the present, it is as Barthes

describes Twombly, a sense of history and want, a warning or desire for the future. Rainer's

work's gestural symbolism carries a narrative closer to an historical explanation, and hence is

political. While Rainer's work strives to be present in a sociological and political arena, Brown's

work lingers on the border of the vague, which carries with it a sense of being present and having

a presence in each moment.

Brown uses a less symbolic language that more closely resembles music than does

Rainer's. Brown's idiosyncratic and poly-directional[12] movement style treats the body

democratically. She gives equal value in action, initiation, and expression whether within body-

parts or her choreographic settings, where each dancer plays or inhabits a role necessary for the

overall outcome and meaning.

While Brown's dance-making perhaps involuntarily leans on history as she is

methodically driven by concepts, she is also open to the immediate, the unknowable moment,

because within it there is, for her, a desire to discover. Brown's work is emotional without the

intention of emotion. While dancing and creating Brown's abstract work, one cannot avoid

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[12] In Brown's movement style, the body's anatomical parts move in different directions simultaneously or
at nearly the same time, often breaking of into a different direction as a part of a spiral or rhythmical
angular "cut," creating a play with lines, rhythm, and space. These cuts are almost micro-architectural in
their emergence; body parts succeed one another, the initiation within microseconds of succeeding body-
parts, visibly simultaneous but in reality – not.

feeling," Each of Brown's pieces, as it is with poetry, carries with it its own sense, its emotional landscape. If it were a different combination of words or movements it would be felt differently – it would be a different landscape. Brown's artistic expression relates to the abstract narrative, where lines and rhythm carries within themselves the whole meaning, seen and unseen.

Barthes states that: "it is never naïve (despite the intimidation of culture, and above all, of specialist culture) to ask, in front of a canvas, *what it represents*. Meaning sticks to man: even when he wants to create non-meaning or extra-meaning, he ends by producing the very meaning of non-meaning or extra-meaning" (183). One can ask, what is present? What is the presence? And you can ask what does it represent? Since dance represents what is present in the moment, – and that includes the performers' presence, – these aspects correlate and can work with or against each other. Questions and/or statements are imbedded in what it represents, but in general, the represented have to be widened to a larger field, more than just the visual.

For Rainer this wider field is mainly historic and political but to a certain degree also representative of the performers as such. While Brown in the making of, the creation of, the choreography, embodies the collective histories within all the dancers involved, and of herself. Together Brown and her dancers create a futurity as soon as it has been established, lives in the present through the bodies of the dancers. And if and when other dancers continue to perform the choreography, the presence of the previous dancers, inhabiting the already lived dance, are present at any particular increments of time while performing. When the dancers' or performers change, when there is a different performer than the original creator, the performed experience contains not only the new performers but also all those, including Brown that lived in it before.

Barthe's deciperhing of Twombly's lines can be applied to the artistic split between Rainer and Brown (Barthes 170). This split appears, not only between Rainer and Brown but also

among certain established form of dance, the expectation, interpretation, and emotive response. The affect the movement gives out is of course an individual matter – but not solely. Lines create a visual rhythm which. speaks like words in a poem. The sequence is important, the length of words and movements are important, and therefore Brown's idiosyncratic directional lines compose the whole. Barthes writes: "[B]y the line, art displaces itself; its center is no longer the object of desire (the splendid body frozen in marble), but the subject of this desire . . . the line . . . always refers to a force, to a direction; it is an energon, a labor which reveals . . . the line is a visible action" (170).

This desire created of the sum of directions and rhythms is specific and reveals the "source" or the meaning of several visible lines, embodying "energon," the energy source. This energy source can transmute different sensations and experiences. The unnamable is real. It is felt. As Marilynne Robinson writes in *Imagination and Communities*, "[T]he unnamed is overwhelmingly present and real for me" (2). This experience beyond oneself is the link connecting the observation of painting, the reading of poetry, and the viewing of dance.

This transmutiable and inexplicable energy exists behind, inside, or beyond and requires a dissolving of borders to draw what is both inside and outside outward. Dissolving or pushing borders and actual physical falling become a means of expanding and penetrating borders. Falling gives the image or impression of falling down, but this falling within Brown's concept is instead a horizontal or an upward falling as in momentary suspension, almost as in flight, in which the conscious mind blends or gives way to the unconscious mind and therefore paves new paths. In so doing, this falling becomes conscious and creates new borders to be expanded.

The visual connects to dance. What one "reads" in the moment of the string of movements that becomes dance becomes a sentence and a poem. This dance poem is a stream of

impressions rushing into the audience's consciousness. Can it be received? What exactly does the audience receive? Can the spectators retrieve anything from those rapid body images? As I. A. Richards explains, the full body contains "the whole meaning,"[13] not soley the "printed signs" or the form itself. It is what is presented by what you see, feel, and hear plus the history you, as an individual, carry with you as an individual. This interpretation in itself creates perhaps different images for the viewer., Richards continueous: "Next arise various pictures 'in the mind's eye'; not of things for which the word stands for . . . other images of various sorts . . . [p]erhaps that odd thing, an image of 'silence'" (18).

Randy Martin contextualizes this in offering a financial interpretation in direct relation to culture and dance. Discussing the postmodern kinestheme as "movement for its own sake," Martin reiterates that "the postmodern in dance most commonly figures as a turn to the pedestrian away from rarified movements" (*Knowledge LTD*, 166, 167). He states that "postmodern technique emphasizes the space between the bodies of dancers or the spatial and kinesthetic relation obtained between dancers and their environment" (173). Here, we can see through environmental and contextualizing space what could be called the *macro* within dance-making. The macro relates to the surrounding environment, including other bodies. Similar relations occur within the *micro* that interconnects the dancers' actual body parts, the order of initiation of joints and/or other body parts, responding to negative space between moving parts.

These micro and macro relations need to be developed further within the field of abstract dance, where speculative theories serve to engage thinking, spilling over known boundaries. Cunningham works mainly on the macro plane while Brown takes into account both the macro

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[13] When Richards speculates on the role of the poet and poetry, the idea of the worldly sensibilities lingers visibly, and momentarily collapses the time from when Richards, Whitehead, and Hansen wrote until now. Where the past, present and future exist as one as it does in poetry where the metaphysical always is present in some shape… the word poet within his Science and Poetry could simply be replace with dance….perhaps not dancer but dance.

and micro planes. Within the micro a dancer"'s emotive self engages through the actual physical execution, not controlled from a pre-emotional state. Through the physical, the dancer receives, discovers, or reveals an emotive response. Here I suggest a re-thinking, a forward thinking of abstraction within dance and its performativity.

Martin described how the somatic techniques introduced in the 1960s and '70s effectively affected a new non-hierarchical performance expression and intention, decentralizing modern dance, as opposed to classical and modern dance's center stage and star system.[14] This development had a profound impact on dance and movement making:

> Release technique is grounded in what bodies would (or should) do if movement emanated from the relation between physiological principles of skeletal or muscular structures, relations and processes, and where movement would go if the consolidated a singular self were opened to the weight, flexibility, amplitude and qualitative properties of the body and its physical surroundings. More than simply letting go of ego, or decentring creativity, postmodern techniques pursue a body intelligence set in motion through dance. (Martin, *Knowledge LTD*, 173)

By allowing the sensibility of the body's physicality to move through air, space and time, with weight giving into the floor and other bodies, gives the speculative a chance to become through the act of motion.

As Martin describes the more current dance domains, there is emphasis on contact-improvisation and street dances' as a continuity from the sovereign state with classical ballet as

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[14] Martin explains the somatic technique's influences as he discusses release technics and contact improvisation. These techniques "are named after principals of motions and not after people." He specifically names Mabel Todd's work *The Thinking Body: A study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man* (1937), which no downtown dancer was without in the 1970s and '80s. These techniques "circulated the notion of ideokinesis, which combined the use of mental images and the structural alignment of the skeleton" (*Knowledge LTD*, 173).

the vertical form with steps inherited from folklore towards a decolonization and risk-taking, a "flying low" with a lateral move, as Martin describes it, as the social kinesthetic of the modern and postmodern performance domains developed. Martin suggests:

> Dancing mobilizes, in one place, particular time- and space-making capacities that draw from wider sensibilities and are dispersed through aspects of many movement practices by which bodies move together. To inquire into what dance is made of and what it makes besides itself is to refer to questions of context or conjuncture—to cultivate a sensibility that slices through as it conjoins or cleaves bodily attentions and orientations. ("A Precarious Dance," 69)

Choreographers or dance-makers produce meaning within dance and performance. This meaning influences the audience, enabling the audience to accumulate information to perceive a bit more next time. This relationship between the viewer and the viewed is an exchange of information. In order to develop this relation further, I argue that in today's context speculative thinking is needed in order to penetrate a certain conservatism that lingers within dance and its performance, especially within image making and narrative form..

WORLDLY SENSIBILITY

In *Feed-Forward: On the Future of Twenty-First-Century Media*, and *Bodies in Code, Interface with Digital Media,* Mark B. Hansen advocates for a data-logical turn and encourages a rethinking of logic. This shift in thought reverberates not only within cultural criticism and speculative theory, but moves towards and into the sensibilities of dance and its performance. Hansen advances Alfred North Whitehead's speculative philosophy and theorizes phenomenologist Maurice Merleu-Ponty's thoughts to reflect new capacities for expression.

Regarding Whitehead, Hansen proposes: "[A] the core of my interest in Whitehead is a very important claim about human experience in relation to a larger domain of experience—what I am calling, with emphatically purposeful reference to the phenomenological tradition, 'worldly sensibility'" (5). This "worldly sensibility" within dance and its performance is significant in regard to the speculative. In this claim that there has been "a shift in the economy between human addressed media and twenty-first-century media," Hansen refers to "media that correlate directly to human modes of sensory experience and cognitive processing" and to "twenty-first-century . . . media that are indirectly correlated to human modes of experience . . . to which human lack any direct access" (5). He then explains that "[t]he idea then is that human experience is undergoing change caused by our entanglement within contemporary media environments" (6). This "entanglement" is non-reversible and helps in acquiring and experiencing new sensibilities. Within the worldly sensibilities lies potential, and through potential then, a possible future, affecting the present (210).

Hansen explains that this indirect access to sensibilities influences that which humans can

access only indirectly, and thus by default influences what we sense and perceive. Hansen calls this *doubleness* because as much as we are influenced by what we cannot access consciously, the worldly sensibilities are in turn influenced by what we perceive and sense. Hansen explains that this doubleness is both "revealed to us and intensified" (6). While this "domain of sensibilities" has previously not been accessible media technology has now rendered it accessible to us and thus expanded the human senses: "[E]very individual act of access is itself a new datum of sensation that will expand the world incrementally but in a way that intensifies worldly sensibility" (6). This two-way street influences relations that occur between the performer(s), the performed, and the audience. This "simultaneous double operation as both a mode of access into a domain of worldly sensibilities and contribution to that domain of sensibilities" (6) sets in motion something indirectly and directly that influences a becoming. This "double operation" is precisely why the speculative, and our understanding of the speculative, are so essential for dance: and its performance: it impacts artistic expression and contributes to a new understanding of being human.

This experience of a deeper level of connectedness creates a sense of strength within the performer through their awareness of belonging to a larger network or community. It balances the idea of the dancer as a subject with that of the dancer as an object. Physical inquiry adds sensorial as well as purely physical body abilities; enlarging the possible palette of execution. In other words, it adds to the technical ability to execute a desire. Therefore consciously listen to and attending to one's interiority and exteriority not only uncovers knowledge connecting the mind to a physical sensation but also puts consciousness within physical body parts; such attention connects the mind to a profound physicality. To enable this furthering of the performer's subject/object relation to self, in order to uncover unknown territory, sometimes

requires un-layering the physical (protective) layers of the body. In allowing the skin and the muscles to actively execute a felt erasure of tension, a de-skinning of accumulated muscle tension makes available new sensibilities. One's thoughts help open oneself up to worldly sensibilities beyond mind/body or psyche/soma.

What the thought process catalyzes matters to performers and dance-makers, since to allow perceptions to manifest in a different kind of thinking also makes it visible in the body. The peeling away of muscular tension allows energy flow to spread throughout the muscle tissue. Therefore through time and repetition, through the conscious mind's actions and the body's activities to consciously give up control and reach into that which is not apparent or even acknowledged-is critical. In relying on the body's intelligence or noticing, perceiving, and discovering another non-body reality, the timelessness of knowledge expands sensibilities. This de-layering, or clearing up and letting go of obstructions, isn't quite a pure physical notion, but it is critical in enabling the nonphysical to be imprinted into the fabric of being, thereby revealing that which cannot be explained.

To listen and to allow the body is also to allow the unconscious and that which is not known to work itself into a circuit of understanding. To let go of control to enlarge the seemingly uncontrollable to be possibly controllable is the body's connection to larger consciousness(es). If control is exercised, the unrealized knowledge disappears and conceals the notion of newly conscious, yet unexperienced thoughts. When the body's intelligence is allowed to work and communicate with the virtual, another reality can be discovered.

Skin

In *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media* (2006), Hansen points to the relation of

world and body in terms of embodiment of the technicity:

> My explicit aim is to show how Merleau-Ponty's final ontology of the flesh, with its
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> postulation of a fundamental indifference between body and world, requires a technics—
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> a theory of the originary technicity of the human. Because the human is essentially a
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> being distributed into nonoverlapping sensory interfaces with the world, it is
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> characterized by a certain "gap" or "divide"—by what Merleau-Ponty calls an écart. As I
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> show, the most primordial form of this écart is the transduction between embodiment and
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> specularity, the transduction that informs the emergence of the visual from primordial
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> tactility. (ix)

Hansen's interest in "the politics of presencing," the process of becoming present, the pre-

sensing of something from interiority towards an exteriority, which thus "positions new media as

a source for the technical contamination of embodied consciousness" (ix). This politics of

presencing works from an embodied point of view, taking the skin as one of the primary sources

of presencing. As he states, "technicity, understood in its broadest sense as a relation to

exteriority, as exteriorization, is not and cannot be something merely added on to some 'natural'

core of embodied life." Here he alludes to a "originary" technicity. Hansen continues, "[r]ather,

it must be understood to be constitutive dimension of embodiment from the start" (ix). Hansen

refers to the presencing or pre-sensing that points to the combined human and virtual worlds.

From a dance and performance viewpoint, this combination is what is experienced or needs to be

experienced and sensed within dancing and dance-making. Hansen has benefitted from digital

artworks in developing his thinking of an "introjection of technic into embodiment" (x). The

"bodies in code" of his title refer to the notion that "embodiment as it is necessarily distributed

beyond the skin . . . presents a singular process through which embodiment is actively produced

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in conjunction with flexible new media artifacts" (x). Hansen evokes a commonality by stressing "the indispensible role played by embodiment in any human experience," and with that, "the inherence of the virtual within the human life as an embodied form of living" (x). Hansen reminds us that the transductor of what is not yet sensed or visible is through and in the écart, gap, or void. I suggest that it is this with which dance and dance-making communicates or intra-relates to different domains of consciousnesses. The skin in this respect serves as a conductor of sorts, especially in dance and dance-making. The skin makes or is rather a medium through which experiences and knowledge lay hidden.

The skin serves as a membrane separating the body's interior form its external surroundings. We could say that the skin functions as a sieve to the soul. This occurs especially in dance interactions, as one can willingly close one's own skin to the outside, to the environment, or to people as conscious or unconscious protection, or open one's skin to the world. Karen Barad notes that "so much happens in touch; an infinity of others—other beings, other spaces, other times—are aroused" (153). As a scientist, Barad explains:

> Particles, fields, and the void are three separate elements in classical physics, whereas they are intra-related in quantum field theory. . . particles no longer take their place in the void; rather, they are constitutively entangled with it. As for the void, it is no longer vacuous. It is living, breathing indeterminacy of non/being. The vacuum is a jubilant exploration of virtuality . . . indeterminacy - are having a field day performing experiments in being and time . . . Virtual particles do not traffic in metaphysics of presence . . . They are ghosty non/existences that teether on the edge of the infinitely fine blade between being and nonbeing . . . . [*V*]irtual *particles are quantized indeterminacies-in-action*. (156-157)

This entanglement Barad emphasizes creates the sense of "other" skins or "others." Skin also meets the air, the floor, the warmth and cold of a place and space and through that effects and affects the outome of the experienced. I argue that the sensibility of skin is consciousness partly physicalized. The surface of the skin, therefore, needs to listen, to sense and respond to the other(s) in order to react or choose not to react to the other(s). The body schema,[15] as Merleau-Ponty describes the totality of consciousness(es) together with the physicalized body, is here in constant expansion, but it can also be voluntarily closed, stagnated,. therefire, knowledge and the ability to allow a certain kind of thinking is essential.

This particularly concurs with dance since what one thinks matters for dance's outcome or visibility. Dance is not only sensing and doing but also thinking and perceiving. As Barad explains, "thought experiments are material matters . . . . Thinking has never been disembodied or uniquely human activity" (154); "the void is not empty, it is an ongoing play of in/determinacies; physical particles are inseparable from the void . . . they intra-act with the virtual particle of the void" (159-160).

With Hansen's theories in mind, the importance of this gap or void becomes apparent because it is the site of the transduction between the un-nor nonconscious and the conscious, where the primordial mixes with reality into the expansion of sensibilities manifesting movements and intentions into the visible world. How can it happen? Furthermore, how can we as dance artists make it happen? And why should it happen? As Clough puts it, "To put this another way: thinking is being opened to other-than-human- agencies, deprivileging the human

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[15] Hansen writes: "[T]he body image characterizes and is generated from primarily visual apprehension of the body as an external object, the body schema emerges from . . . the operational perspective of embodied knowledge. As such, it encompasses an 'originary,' preobjective process of the world constitution by giving priority to the internal prospectives of the organism . . . what lies . . . in the interactional domain of embodied enaction . . . . In contrast to the intentional (and sometimes conscious) nature of the body image, a *body schema* involves an extraintentional operation carried out prior to or outside of intentional awareness" (*Bodies in Code*, 38-39).

subject while placing humans in a larger environment of affective forces—calling for reformulating the human mind and the body, as well as their synthesis as the ground and figure of experience" (7).

Hansen explains that, "the écart in this sense is a marker of reversibility as a necessary condition of phenomenal experience" (72). Here Hanson refers to Merleau-Ponty's realization that the sensation of touching and being touched happens at the same time and yet not quite: there is not an overlapping that happens but a simultaneousness that has room for more. It is this split that "explains the body's need for the world (and also the world's need of the body, being's need for manifestation or phenomenalization)" (72). This *doubleness* is experienced in dance-making and performing. It is a double activation, where the boundaries of the skin and that which is sensed can be expanded upon to respond to the environment, including other human bodies. Barad emphasizes this:

> [I]ndeed all material "'entities" are entangled relations of becoming . . . that materiality "itself" is always already touched by and touching infinite configurings of other beings and other times . . . or rather, what matter is: matter is condensation of response-ability. Touching is a matter of response. Each of "us" is constituted in need for the world. Each of 'us' is constituted as responsible for the other, as being in touch with the other. (160-161)

This in particular concerns partnering within dance. Partnering is a supportive dance compound of weight-sharing or support for two or more dancers, where touching serves as a means of help for execution. The skin contact is critical, not only within contact improvisation, in which a

sharing of weight occurs at all times with a multitude of body parts and skin surfaces,[16] but also within traditional partnering and lifts in classical ballet and communal dancing, where a hand holding any skin surface can guide or alter a movement. This action and reaction is a response-ability from all parties involved in the moment.

The ability to respond and the responsibility to do so within a dance work's creation of new movement inventions" requires an allowance that cannot be thought out conceptually: this allowance is instinctive and accidental (Martin, *Knowledge LTD*, 167-168). To forge new techniques, deepen thought, expand boundaries, and reveal more what it means to be human: the ability to voluntarily or involuntarily react, respond to the world and to oneself is an important part of dance and its performance. These entanglements that occur within abstract dance that leans on non-narrative but felt realities specifically points to what Hansen describes as "a sensible commons that is not simply common sense" (Hansen, *Bodies in Code,* 83). The gap, the écart made visible through the knowledge of the dancing, the in-between being perceived as it is within poetry, visual art, and music—the meaning between the lines. The poet, a non-knowing bearer of the metaphysical, now beyond the body of that which cannot be given an explanation. Here the dance becomes poetry in motion.

This poetry in motion pointing to something beyond the visible carries with it worldly sensations and sensibilities, both felt and viewed. It is a becoming of sorts, a futurity of sorts. Hansen explains: "[T]he role of vision and its complex articulation with technicity, the sharing of body schemata serves to ground a commonality of the visible. It thus explains why the visual experience of other (of other's image) can yield intercorporeity. For this reason Merleau–Ponty can invoke 'an opening of my body to other bodies: just as I touch my hand touching, I perceive

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[16] Invented by Steve Paxton in the 1970s, contact improvisation is a sharing of weight and energies that allows surprising lifts and movement sequences. It has since gained in popularity and is now an almost internationally codified dance technique.

others as perceiving. The articulation of their body on the world is lived by me in the articulation of my body ion the world where I see them'" (Hansen, *Bodies in Code*, 83). Merleau-Ponty here aptly describes the respons-ability Barad is pointing out between the audience, the performer(s), and the performed that constitutes interrelation and codependency.

This then encompasses a larger environment where the skin becomes part of the worldly sensibilities that then become part of a world skin. With that as a base, Hansen continues, "This means that the body schema has now become something more than simply the agent of the body's access to the world: 'if to sense my body is also to have it postured in the world' (224), that is because the flesh of the world is only phenomenalized in the flesh of the body (or as Merleau-Ponty puts it, because 'the flesh of the body makes us understand the flesh of the world' (218)" (82). This in sum is why abstract dance and its performance have a meaning to convey.

Through the embodiment of that which is not embodied, "all exteriorizations are exteriorizations of the skin" (Hansen, *Bodies in Code*, 59). This points to the body as a container separating the interior and the exterior world,through its skin. The skin also encapsulates a larger interior world or interiority with the never-ending exterior universe. This "worldskin," embraces both the interior and the exterior as "one." Hansen writes:

> The skin, in sum, is the most primordial locus and expression of the indifferentiation of the biological and the psychical marked and overcome by the function of anaclisis. That is why it supports the proto-origin of specularity, of self-relation/heterorelation, as the fundamental sensible écart. This écart is essentially technical because it is the sensible-transcendental condition for all exteriorization. (62)

It is within this gap, the écart, that dance-making occurs. Supported by the primordial and the un or nonconscious, the écart acts between the sensory inputs and outputs. There is a constant

oscillation between what is known and not known and what is presencing, what occurs in the

present time and that which is its becoming. The "doubling of perception" constitutes in dance

what will be made into repeatable motions. It is this "tactile dimension [that] serves to confer a

bodily-that is, sensory- reality on external perceptual experience (whether it is "physical" or

"virtual"). It generates a felt correlate of perception that is part of the functionalist understanding

of embodied agency," (Hansen, *Bodies in Code*, 5). This duality or polydirectionality of sensory

attributes directs the outcome of decision making within dance. In Hansen's intriguing words

concerning universality: "Bluntly put, the new mixed reality paradigm foregrounds the

constitutive or ontological role of the body in giving birth to the world" (5).

How does this polydirectionality manifest itself in a group dancing and creating new

work together, continuously "building" as the process of exploration and creation of new work

was coined by postmodern choreographer Trisha Brown? If, within the action of creating

movements, one "gives into" the skin (whether one's own and or others) while meeting another

skin, it creates not only a feeling of doubling as one is sharing surfaces but also a sensing and

perceiving of a larger consciousness. This perceiving must contain an element of "trust" within

it. If this trust is lacking, the skin will involuntarily close up, and the experience will not be

there. It actually takes more energy and effort to repel others than to expand or receive.[17] Hansen

explains: "[T]his sharing of embodied schematism introduces reversibility at the heart of

intercorporeality" (83). He cites Merleau-Ponty: "'My corporal schema is a normal means of

knowing other bodies and these know my body. Universal-lateral of the co-perception of the

world'" (qtd. in Hansen, 83). Resisting this co-perception while performing or creating is also to

resist the reversibility; instead of increased consciousness, it advances a certain muteness and

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[17] Philosopher Shaun Gallagher writes "'In contrast to the intentional (and sometimes conscious) nature of the body image, a body-schema involves an extraintentional operation carried out prior to or outside of intentional awareness'" (qtd. in Hansen, *Bodies in Code*, 39).

non-communication.

Affective Knowing

Patricia Clough argues that the affective turn "illuminates . . . both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with other relations between these two powers" (*The Affective Turn*, ix). Here, Clough coincides with Hansen, and they come together in a performative way, meaning something that is becoming, are similarly becoming in both. Clough delves deeper into the affective turn, pronounces that "the affective turn, therefore expresses a new configuration of bodies, technology, and matter instigating a shift in thought in critical theory," further recognizing "that politics, economy, and culture always have been and are presently being reconfigured differently across various regions of the world," (2). Culture, politics, economy, and the social with its intra-relation keeps changing and evolving. Therefore, following Clough, within dance and its performance, this reconfiguration of forces taken into practice will effect and impact future artistic expression and hence politics. Michael Hardt's foreword states: "[T]this affective turn also opens new avenues for study, casts previous work in fresh light, and indicates novel possibilities for politics," (ix). This, I argue, also speaks to how any artistic expression is inherently political.

Hardt also identifies why the affective turn "introduces an important shift." He states that the affective turn "refers equally to the body and the mind," and to "reason and passion," without stating a duality, but rather opening the idea of body and mind suggesting a larger universe with its consciousness(es). Hardt gives the affective turn its proper place as a function of becoming and being. Clough writes:

In this conceptualization, affect is not only theorized in terms of the human body. Affect

is also theorized in relation to the technologies that are allowing us both to "see" affect and to produce affective bodily capacities beyond the body's organic-psychological constraints. The technoscientific experimentation with affect not only traverses the opposition of the organic and the nonorganic; it also inserts the technical into felt vitality, the felt aliveness given in the preindividual bodily capacities to act, engage, and connect—affect and be affected. (2)

"To affect and be affected," incorporates, separately and together, the performer's and the audience's felt aliveness. This also means theorizing the social in terms of twenty-first-century media and its contribution "allowing us . . . to see" in the present while affecting the future. Again, I propose that with dance and its performance, the felt aliveness is in constant flux as it oscillates between the felt body and the mental acknowledgement of the mind of that which was felt. The felt aliveness in dance expands the possibility of the felt further through experience and the notion (it is a *doubleness*) between actuality and potentiality, allowing new realities to occur. This experience, to affect and be affected, happens equally for the performers through doing and for the audiences through viewing.

Clough constantly rethinks the human and its technology; she encourages us, "to re-think subjectivity and sociality in the shift from private and the public to the personal and the networked" (*The User-Unconscious*, x). Building on Whitehead and originary technicity that insists "on the indeterminacy immanent to human and other-than-human agencies" (ix), Clough discusses a move from the affective turn to the datalogical turn. Drawing on Tiziana Terranova and Luciana Parici's *Heat-Death: Emergence and Control in Genetic Engineering and Artificial Life* (2000), Clough explains:

[F]or the body as machinic assemblage that is "neither mechanistic nor organismic, but a

matter of affectivity, fluids and energy flows, alluring the disparate to each other as well

as sustaining the continuous" . . . placing the technicity on the same ontological plane as

being or recognizing an originary technicity. There also is a gesturing to other-than-

human agencies, deprivileging or decentering the conscious subject and human

experience and again necessitating a re-thinking of measure. (xii)

The "deprivileging or decentering the conscious subject" resonates with dance and its

performance in that both subject and performer feel a sense of connecting to a network or the

networked and have to stay open to "energy flows" and sensations from both the interior and

exterior world or context. This elusive but real sensation is especially relevant to abstract dance.

This non-measurability comes forth as a sense such that there is within it a kind of measure,

perhaps a non-measure measure.   In "War by Other Means: What Difference Do(es) the

Graphic(s) Make?" Clough speculates further, "proposing that affective measuring is the

measure of what is indeterminate, already dynamic, or lively . . . [a]ffective measuring functions

differently; affective measure . . . is a 'probe for the improbable,' the indeterminate, or the not-

yet of futurity (ibid)," (Clough, *The User Unconscious*, xiii). She explains that "affective

measure produces" an enthrallment with measure that turns measure into the "alluring evidence

of an already present future (ibid)" (xiii). This presencing is what affects dance-making, giving it

a felt intention that in turn will affect that which affects the future. This understanding of

measure is linked to the originary technicity of the skin.

IN SUPPORT OF ABSTRACTION

With dance-making, abstraction opens potentials within the dance-maker, the performer, and the audience; it paves the way for another layer of nonconsciousness(es) to become conscious. The action *and* intention of staying open to new sensations help move the not-yet-conscious toward a conscious state of expression. These processes support new sensibilities. This ongoing transformation in turn influences each individual's creative and interpretive abilities, thus altering and benefiting the future of dance. Abstraction in performance affords an expanded process and experience through making the nonconscious conscious: the becoming of performance.

Within dance expression, however, abstraction still struggles to reach a larger domain of appreciation. Svetlana Boym describes one possible reason for this non-acceptance: "Nostalgia . . . is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement. But, it's also a romance with one's own fantasy" (xiii) [18]. She continues, "Nostalgia itself has an utopian dimension, only it is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past either but rather moves sideways. The nostalgic feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space" (xiv). She quotes Michael Kimmen: "nostalgia . . . is eventually history without guilt" (qtd. in Boym, xiv).

This "history without guilt" and "longing for a home" resonate not only with many

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[18] Henry Corbin's essay *Mundus Imaginalis,* or "The Imagery and the Imaginal" (1972), deals with fantasy and the imaginary. According to Corbin, the imaginary is that which is not real but fantasized about. In contrast, the Imaginal is that which is real but for which we have no words. Inherent in his essay is the timeless notion of the Imaginal through history, through Eastern philosophies (to be adapted to fit into today's Western thinking). Corbin explains that we must differentiate these two terms in order to translate a text as accurately as possible to the Western world.

popular dance expressions, but also with different audiences. Nostalgia involves a preference for aoviding change. Within dance-making, it means then that the more conservative dances with their known and recognizable vocabularies spread that sentiment within their dance idioms. Known vocabulary manifests and holds in place an artistic expression unable to move forward. It resonates culturally on a collective psychological level.

Within conservative narrative dance forms and their known vocabularies, a dancer's body becomes and serves as a bodily container, or a receptacle that can be filled with different kinds of stories with known emotions without expanding and changing the actual physical form. This means that the same visual form expresses a diverse range of known psychological emotions. Thus, what is communicated through the body does not depend on the physical impact, or the actual action that creates the visual form. Hence the body-form does not impact the psyche but it is rather already a controlled emotional or psychological expression apart from the physical form. In *Reading Melanie Klein* (1998), Julie Mitchell writes: "Historical reality both is and is not changed by new ways of seeing and experiencing—so too is psychical reality" (16). Mitchell continues: "For Klein what is unconscious is the biological and affectual condition of the human being. In essence . . . [t]he unconscious exists as a condition and from it emerge pre-consciousness and consciousness" (24). Therefore dance in its more conservative realm is working against a new felt feeling, a new consciousness emanating from the un or nonconscious psyche. In contrast, abstract dance and its vocabulary instead involves and encourages new felt experiences and new forms.

Recognizable conservative dance vocabulary—often agreed upon between audiences and the performed—creates accepted identification. This collective acknowledgement creates within each individual felt assurance and safety. To fill a known form with known emotional content

creates and stabilizes a response and consensus between the performed, the performer(s), and the audience(s): the nostalgia then is safety and home, awakening within and through that which creates a sensation of wellbeing by resisting experiences of something new or different.

Whether a dance fits known forms determines whether a dance piece is understood or dismissed and whether it is seen as entertainment or artistic expression. In *Ugly Feelings* (2007), Sianne Ngai takes up this "uncomfortability" within the audience. She explains what might inform a refusal to engage with what can promote change as "dysphoric feelings and other sites of emotional negativity, (such as) ambivalent situations of suspended agency" (1). Ngai questions why, on a political plane, a "non-action" toward social and other injustices occurs. She suggests that dysphoric feelings "draw together two seemingly disparate philosophical definitions . . . [that] can either increase or diminish ones power to act" (1-2).[19] This also relates to reactions to artistic projects, be they dance, theater, music, poetry, or visual arts. Continuing Ngai's thought regarding a decreased "power to act" means that anything that disturbs will not be easily accepted (let alone acted upon); the fear of the unknown and that which cannot be controlled outweighs the interest in or openness to new experiences.

Increased sensibilities in audience and performer heighten potential for acceptance and broaden recognition of the performed while lessening dysphoric feelings and fears of the unknown. Instead, the audience feels a desire to partake. This is the work of abstraction.

Audiences inherently participate when they view performance and dance. The felt experience promotes an automatic comparison to what the audiences already know. This reaction exposes a conscious or non-conscious judgment of the viewed, a self-validation that

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[19] Ngai writes that the ugly feelings "thus draw together two seemingly disparate philosophical definitions—Hanna Arendt's claim that 'what makes man a political being is his faculty of actions' and description of Baruch Spinoza's descriptions of emotions as 'waverings of the mind' than can either increase or diminish one's power to act—and attend to the aesthetics of the ugly feelings that index these suspensions" (1-2).

then determines the involvement of the audience. Ngai has explained that this dysphoria (or non-dysphoric feeling) promotes acceptance or rejection of the viewed. Within abstraction, whether audiences feel positively or negatively towards the non-recognizable experiences felt, they need repeated exposure in order to familiarize and increase their acceptance of non-recognizable sensibilities.

Therefore, when the audience's perception depends on previous experiences and degree of self-knowledge and familiarity with the performance. Their reaction in turn affects the performer(s). This exchange affects again what each audience member sees, feels, and responds to; it is an energetic exchange. So, the idea of abstraction without a narrative can thus expand consciousness(es) and affect on a larger domain. As Clough suggests, "bodily-based perception and consciousness are displaced as central to experience. The technical not only supplements consciousness and bodily-based perception, but is actually the condition of their arising" (*User Unconscious* 127). With this, a broader domain can be reached and influence the political and the social, which in turn influences the nonconscious.

Abstraction can work on a plane that metaphysically impacts both the creator and the viewer in allowing something that is prepared to enter a conscious state to become known. Here is where the speculative theories meet practical embodiment and execution of thoughts. To experience new sensibilities, a non-recognizable notion of something within the bodily realm gives an imprint and a memory within the body – the embodied body. This in turn informs a larger collective self where the speculative has already metamorphosed to an actuality making way for new speculation to take place through increased sensibilities. There is an oscillation (or meshing) between body and psyche, between thought and action. Bodily consciousness influences a particular notion of the thought process, increasing its sensibilities and transforming

it. The experience of that sensibility harbors a potential to influence creative output and to impact

the cultural, social, and political toward an ultimate betterment of the human. Therefore the

reason for abstraction in dance and its performance is to make available a shared human

consciousness and to work together to make the unknown known.

Accidents and Risks

While artistic performance creations use conceptual framework(s) and methods, both

postmodern and contemporary choreographers like Trisha Brown and Merce Cunningham

opened themselves to the accidental, to that which cannot be planned. This openness to the

accidental was the source of their revolutionary brilliance and gift for exploration. In her

"building" sessions, as she called her creative process in the studio, Brown in particular used

accidental occurrences to encouraging exploration of possibilities and boundaries in her

improvisational workings, combining both created material and unknown actions within the

macro (the movement formation in place and space) and the micro (the movements themselves,

the interrelationship of body and parts, their rhythms, sequencing, and execution, together with

their combined visual relation). Brown also introduced the idea of the "wild card," an impossible

thought and intention to be carried out, or a body thrown into the mix, within a building session,

as an enzyme, creating possible risks and accidents—an accident-promoter.

Through his "chance methods," Cunningham also actively engaged in a new, unplannedt

system of creation. Archivist David Vaughan states: "[John] Cage was fond of saying that what

he and Cunningham aspire to was "the imitation of nature in the manner of her operation,"

Cunningham dances are not lacking in structure, but the structure is organic, not preconceived"

(Vaugn, *Merce Cunningham: 50 Years,* 7). Chance procedures could consist of rolling a dice

determining, for example, the order of a preset dance move, phrase or direction, creating

unimaginable compositions. Cunningham used this method to create impossible combinations of

movement sequences. Cunningham's "events," as he called performances based on his chance

method, became surprise dance collages of sorts. Both Brown and Cunningham welcomed and

actively sought out something new. These accidents[20] in turn gave birth to new accidents that

were impossible to plan in advance. The experiences of the accidents create new sensibilities,

which encourage and open new ways of thinking and feeling. This generation of accidents is an

ongoing process that moves steadily forward. Therefore, the speculative is essential for dance

and its expression because it unveils that which is not known but which can become known.

Performance(s) are in a constant shift in perception, execution, and expression. Leaning

on William James, Whitehead[21] sheds light on the historic and virtual aspects of the "becoming"

of performance. In *Process and Realities* (1929), Whitehead writes that "[t]he 'subjective aim,'

which controls the becoming of a subject, is that subject feeling a proposition with the subjective

form of purpose to realize it in that process of self-creation" (25). Hansen's reinterpretation of

Whitehead is imperative for the future of choreography. "For Whitehead, experiential entities, or

what he calls 'societies,' are composed of assemblages of other entities," (Hansen, *Feed*

Forward, ix). Later, Hansen argues, "[w]hether taken individually or as nodes in a network,

agency must be reconceptualized in a fundamental way" (2). This re-thinking of agency is what

will effect and affect the making of movement; it is an increasingly critical aspect to express

"affective knowing" (Clough, *User Unconscious*, 84). Hansen points out:

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[20] Benjamin Bratton mentions architect Paul Virilio's known "axiom that the invention of any new kind of technology is also simultaneously the invention of a new type of accident" (13).

[21] Hansen explains: "Whitehead positioned his precursor William James as the inaugurator of a new period in philosophy . . . . [He] positioned himself as James's successor, Whitehead's entire speculative scheme is predicated precisely on the notion that consciousness is the function of hosting . . . of other entities that act through it" (*Feed Forward*, x).

Each actual entity is "divisible" in an indefinite number of ways, and each way of

"division" yields its definite quota of prehensions. A prehesion reproduces itself the

general characteristics of an actual entity: it is referent to an external world, and in this

sense will be said to have a "vector quality"; it involves emotion and purpose, and

valuation, and causation. (19)

Dance expression and the instinct and intention to make "new work" (Martin, *Knowledge LTD*,

167-168) involve this vector quality: emotion, purpose, valuation and causation. If thinking or

sensibility is not enhanced or taken into account, the unfolding of expression will stagnate, and

the ability to enact or impact a social or political level will lessen. The inventions of new

movements depend on the speculative to continue moving forward and not stagnate in a codified

or habitual movement vocabulary. Knowledge production within movement invention becomes

actions that manifest results in a non-political politicized dance, affecting viewers and

participants to feel new sensations.

How can art influence and carry meaning into the future? Clough describes this

engagement first in *Autoaffection,* in which she names the "teletechnological"[22] (2) and later in,

User Unconscious, in which she urges entanglement with "the data-fication of twenty-first –

century media that is calling into question assumptions about human experience, consciousness,

and bodily perception, as well as agency, historicity, system, and structure" (127). Clough insists

that the data–fication, the datalogical turn, raises questions about "methods for studying the

social" as well as the "interrelationship of concepts and technologies for navigating inside

datasets" (126). The datalogical turn also raises the question of how data-fication and body

awareness, the body schema, can allow "interrelational datasets," to navigate both a felt and an

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[22] Clough explains that "the age of the teletechnology" is where the beginning of the human, the virtual and the worldly sensibilities' entangled engagement starts (*Autoaffection*, 2).

exposed visible reality into new construction. Clough continues to interconnect with Hansen's sentiment of the molecular—that data is stored within the cells. For dance, the molecular exists not only in the skin, but also in the worldly skin that encompasses the interior and the exterior of the embodied self. Clough offers:

> As Hansen sees it, twenty-first-century media no longer store human experience as such; rather, they store bits of data that "register molecular increments of behavior" that are never an expression of lived human experience. . . . As such, the twenty-first-century media have shifted from "addressing human first and foremost" to registering "the environmentality of the world itself," providing a "worldly sensibility" that is prior to human consciousness and bodily-based perception and reembeds "consciousness in a far richer context of the causally efficacious lineage that have produced it". . . . The data-fication of twenty-first-century-media shows that consciousness and bodily-based perception are accomplishments that involve "the coexistence of multiple experiential presents—multiple, partially overlapping presents from different timeframes and scales."
>
> (127)

Hortense Spillers asks, what are we seeing with—our eyes or our psyche? Her question enters into a simple but complex notion of who we are as humans, suggesting that we are much more than our eyes but even more than our psyches. Therefore, speculative theories and the speculative turn benefits artistic expression(s) and will make possible new artistic revelations that have their place socially and politically.

Dance and art have an increasingly vital role to play within today's society since bodily knowledge and the effect and affect cannot be experienced without them. The body as organism will intra–relate with planetary-scale computation, geopolitical realities, and the virtual into the

worldly sensibilities where the concrescence meet and effect potential, potential that in itself, therefore, has intensities and these intensities carries with it affect that on a nonconscious level influences choices and behavior before they are executed: the data-logical turn in physical action!

Furthering sensibility toward becoming advances dance and its expression. This is a co-production between the thought, the un-thought (prehension), and the body with its bodily consciousness(es) affecting the final outcome of bodily vocabulary as well as the execution of that vocabulary. It matters how the execution of the body transpires. The rhythm with its direction and conscious or nonconscious intent tcreates together the visible expression. The speculative notion helps in allowing this "affective knowing" to manifest (Clough, *User Unconscious*, 84). Clough states: "The technical not only supplements consciousness and bodily-based perception, but is actually the condition of their arising" (127). The idea of the image, as well as the actual entity (the environmental within the image as entity), what is hidden in that image that can and will effect the affective knowing of the onlooker as well as the performer. What can the image "energetically" distribute? Clough confronts this question:

> [W]here affect is to be distinguished from emotion, referring instead to bodily capacities to affect and be affected: the capacity to act, to engage, to connect. While emotions are commensurate with a subject, affect, being bodily, traverses, even beyond, a subject. Affect's nonconscious, asubjective potentiality open to entanglements with technologies that modulate affective intensities below cognition and consciousness. (71)

Clough continues, seemingly explaining what the performative experience becomes for audience and performer:

> Prehension is a kind of knowing, an affective knowing, prior to individuation and

consciousness; as [] Parisi puts it: "Prehension may be better described as enactment . . . an affection that coincides not with here and now but with a vector connecting here with there, immediately before and after." (84)

Here, Parisi and Clough make clear what a dance language and or execution of dance as language can mean. To allow and reconfigure movement-invention into a knowledge production, to assert an artistic, scientific endeavor to come together as affective knowing, allowing new sensibilities from the prehension to occur, to coincide within and resonate without. The here with there as an artistic expression will create a new movement language and with that new sensibilities to be imprinted affectively and experientially. The risk attached to not knowing also sets up a possible artistic failure. The risk is within the artistic realm to convincingly elaborate not knowing the end product. There might not be an end product but rather just a brief stop within the progression of thought and action, a snapshot of being. Failure here is only relevant to the general acceptance of expression. The failure and the risk are true potentials within the performative.

PERFORMATIVE PROCESS OR PERFORMATIVITY

The risk and potential for the current generation of dance-makers—including Moriah Evans, Maria Hassabi, Liz Santoro, and Gillian Walsh—lies in each dance-maker's unique ability to physicalize a consciousness of becoming. These process-choreographers identify themselves as choreographers and artists, opening their profession to a wider realm of interpretation and engaging in a continuation of abstract expression. In so doing, they revere Gilles Deleuze's concept of a *body without organs* (4, 150) into what appears to be *organs without body*. The intention and execution of the bodily realm try to erase physical boundaries relying on algorithms, enlivened "states" of being, and impossible interior movement initiatives. These lived experiences, barely moving or moving from an interior place, allow the contextual space the geography of the architecture, to support, speak, and affect the performed while the performed is "lived" without pretense—seemingly without time.

Evans, Hassabi, Santoro, and Walsh create, examine, question, and re-think history. They lean on what was and unapologetically pursue of human and non-human discourse, a different set of knowledge of being, revealing, and connecting with the world and the planetary. Within their performances, felt energies create the overall impression in ways that depend on who the performers are. These performances are the medium through which access to an expanded universe happens, forming what the audience feels. It is the performers openness to themselves and to worldly sensibilities that enable the audience's reception of the performance. "Subjectivity cannot be restricted to the status of inert force in the present, but literally upsurges *in and as* the transition *from present to future*: by effecting the future," Hansen writes. "[T]the

force of historically achieved potentiality—into the present, subjectivity arises in the *in-between-present-and-future*" ("Our Predictive Condition," 122-123). This, I argue, is why speculative thinking and theories are paramount in art and, in particular, dance and its performance. "[T]he real potentiality of the future is already felt *as intensity in the present*—it's felt, that is, *prior to its actualization and its full force of potentiality*: this feeding of potentiality for the future generates—indeed, simply *is*—the subject" (122). In order to create a better future, or rather to have a chance to impact the future politically and socially through the conscious and nonconscious, we must lean on known information as well as accidental occurrences. Clough summarizes:

> the performance is a commentary on the current debates in philosophy and critical theory
> in which attention is shifting from intentionality as embodied in the individual to a
> phenomenological interimplication of human and nonhuman animacies as the human
> body finds its "technosomatic correlate" that violates ontological assumptions at the limit
> of the body of the individual, suggesting at once the un- or non- or supernatural. (*User*
> *Unconscious* 149-150)

Different entities and broader societies play an increasingly important role within dance and its performance. This ephemeral art form is continuously morphing. Art historian Claire Bishop brings attention to a "performance-shift." While Bishop's focus is the visual arts, her ideas are relevant to the time-based art forms of performance and dance. She states that "visual art's return to live performance over the course of the 1990s . . . took place via a shift from performance to the *performative*" (4). This shift she identifies pertains not only to visual art actions but also to dance and performance. Bishop points readers' attention to the differences between a concert stage and alternative or site-specific spaces to emphasize that context has experiential and

political meaning. She also points out the historical relevance of this.

Coupled with speculative theories, practical knowledge therefore encourages and manifests a widened understanding that reaches into a larger domain of thought. Karen Barad explains agential realism and performativity not in terms of theatrical performance but rather in regard to how matter behaves—performs—which is always in relation to something. Barad explains that "a performative account insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being" (133). She continues, "performativity is properly understood as a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve" (133).

In coining the term "agential realism," a reconceptualization of Danish quantum physicist Niels Bohr's theory of phenomena., Barad states:

> *All bodies come to matter through the worlds interactivity—its performativity,* this is true
> not only of the surface or contours of the body but also of the body in the fullness of its
> physicality including the very "atoms" of its being. Bodies are not objects with inherent
> boundaries and properties: they are material-discursive phenomena. "Human" bodies are
> not inherently different from "nonhuman" ones. (152-153)

The intra-relation of the nonbinary nature of body/mind, body/spirit, human/nonhuman, corporeal/consciousness, virtual or post-human influences human agency. This seeming dualism is nonbinary since there are many forces simultaneously at work. Dance and its performance are part of our contextual environment and need to develop in tandem with that environment and with the continued expansion of our world and universe. Brian Massumi's expression, as Clough reminds us in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007), "the chaotic co-functioning of

the political, economic and cultural dimensions could be dubbed the 'social,"(1). The rephrasing or the inter-changeability of these words, systems, or phenomenon, points to their intra-dependency: The political, economical, and social also constitute the cultural. Therefore, artistic expression, I argue, carries with it political and social consequences.

In her *Fame Notions* at Performance Space New York, May 2019, choreographer Gillian Walsh showed a "lived" time-process through dance as stillness(es), where the performers seemed to shift positions or inhabitancy of body form or embodied form when the lived shifted. Siobhan Burke notes that Walsh is "deeply conflicted" regarding dance, and that Walsh "seeks to understand what she [Walsh] calls the 'fundamentally pessimistic, or alienating pursuit' of being a dancer." Walsh has for some time explored the quiet internal spaces that allow for the audience to "rest" their eyes as on a sculpture or a painting, resulting in deeper, nonnarrative participations. In *Famed Notions*, the audience enters a space with windows on two sides, sounds of birdsong in the air, mixed with electronics creates a wave-like sound-motion, increasing and decreasing in strength. The figures-two at first-one performer in the center while the other on the floor, in the corner. Both are still but inhabiting an aliveness, neither moving until necessary, the shifting of position or form seemingly randomly happens as to keep the aliveness. The vast space—the openness of the windows, the nature sounds—makes the viewing experience feel like a planetary sensation. The invitation to participate instead of forcing a viewpoint opens the audience's senses; the non-doing becomes doing. Walsh through her interrogation of the dancer as both collective and person within a political and economical position, and a social hierarchical concern, makes her dance important within the evolution of abstract dance. Her dances present not only movement choices but also a consciousness, much as we all share a collectiveness, interconnected by networks invisible to the human eye but felt.

Choreographer Maria Hassabi shares Walsh's interest in interiority and has engaged in slowness and stillness for several decades. Hassabi's 2016 Museum of Modern Art piece, *Plastic*, is a testament to her process. Christopher Bollen states: "There is the almost minimal elegance of an Agnes Martin or Barnett Newman painting to her [Hassabi's] productions, but one that never loses the sense that her material is the human body, the muscular, warm-blooded vertebrate form." Hassabi herself explains that her exploration, "the effect of stillness and how you transfer from one pose of stillness to the next, without making it look like a tableau vivant but keeping it a consistent flow" (Hassabi, "Maria Hassabi"). This flow, sensed by the audience as "the future in the present" (Hansen, "Our Predictive Condition," 123) is something lived and moving; it touches on a nonconscious level that allows for sensibilities to function in a deep affective way. This is sculpture in motion that reveals an erasure of boundaries and exposure of something larger than the human; Hassabi's insistence on time and process makes and transforms the non-doing into doing—and the doing into non-doing on a universal scale.

Moriah Evans and Liz Santoro share an interest in methodology but uses the body in different ways. Even though Evans is deeply invested in the physical interiority of the human body, her investigation of movement initiation and social choreography are deeply entrenched in the concept of political and artistic futurity for dance and its performance. Asked in a 2015 interview with Lawrence Kumpf about her relationship to structure, deviation, and dance as opposed to choreography, Evans answers, "What else is chorography other than structure? Dance can be a deviation from structure." She continues, "[W]e cannot control the conditions in which dance emerges as a 'true' state, a magical moment." Since then, Evans has dove deeper into non-formalist expression by sourcing movement from the internal organs. In her 2018 piece *Configure*, Evans shares an emphatic line with a psychological bend, neither relying on emotion

nor shying away from the emotive. An oscillation of sorts happens within and in between the body and the consciousness(es), creating intensity, discomfort, and satisfaction along its way. Catherine Damman writes, "*Configure* is in fact an exercise in vibration." These vibrations are physical, metaphysical and psychological. They deliver another human experience for the performer, the audience, and the performed, thereby revealing human nature. The surrounding environment, including the audience, becomes the context of the experienced; we are invisibly implemented within what seems like a planetary compound. Here the movements are generated from a deep conscious state and an embodiment of organs, cells, and fluids. By thinking, Evans and the performers perform rigorously in scores that Evans has methodically predetermined. The results are surprisingly positive: the dancing body's consciousness is enlarged, making it more expressive and enabling the abstract context to make this non-choreographic event into a social and political context.

In *For Claud Shannon,* part of The Kitchen's "From Minimalism into Algorithm" curated by Mathew Lyons in New York in 2016, Liz Santoro and her collaborator Pierre Godard explored their interest in the relationship between movement and text. They created an algorithmic piece as a "choreographic machine" where "twenty-four discreet movement 'atoms' for arms and legs served as a movement lexicon from which a fixed number of inputs randomly chosen each time the piece is performed" (Santoro and Godard). This resulted in a dance in which the performers performed a physical and mental task which increased in intensity and affect. As time passed, each performer showed a crack or a gap. As a crack in an old oil painting reveals a previously hidden under-layer, the dancers revealed an internal human vulnerability. This abstract and machinelike endeavor became human through its use of method, intensities, and openness to felt sensibilities. Through repetition, Santoro strips the human form to bare

consciousness. The surface reveals something fleshy and human that touches us positively.

Santoro and Godard take us on a journey where the motion steers our attention toward something

beneath—an underlying process opening up to matter. Through their practice and interest in the

speculative, these choreographers and artists encourage a continuing interrogation of what dance

and its performance means to society and what it means to the art form itself. Through their

practices and the outcomes of their processes, a continuation of thought enables a larger

interpretational field.

 Feminist theorist Zakiyyah Iman Jackson points to this complexity and forces a

reconfiguration of human agency. She writes:

> With the full-fledged arrival of posthumanist theories in the 1990s, the epistemological
>
> integrity of "man" was subject to a heretical critique, as posthumanists challenged a range
>
> of conceptual pieties rooted in the Enlightenment thought. Posthumanists tempted to
>
> reorient our understanding of human agency by underscoring human subjectivity's
>
> interdependency and porosity with respect to a world Enlightenment humanists often
>
> falsely claimed to control. Demonstrating a profound skepticism of subject/object
>
> distinction and dominant ontologies, the first decades of posthumanism general vital
>
> critical concepts, such as "cyborg," "autopoiesis," and "virtual body." Together, these
>
> concepts stressed the processual and co-constitutive nature of human embodiment,
>
> knowledge production, and culture in relation to environment, objects, nonhuman
>
> animals and technology. (Human) agency was reconceived as a network of relations
>
> between humans and nonhumans, replacing the figure of sovereignty with the process of
>
> enmeshment such that intentionality is de-ontologized. (670-671)

Jackson's reinterpretation is applicable on an artistic evolutionary scale. It impacts and benefits

dance and its performativity, as it also includes the onlooker. Audience perception is a vital component of this advancement of visual expression. The underlying concept and desire work together with sensibilities, notions, and the experience to form perception. These experiences are shared and furthered by the relationship between the performers and the audience.

CONCLUSION

The making of dance and its performance encodes a re-thinking as the physical interiority makes its way to the exterior as a universally shared expression. Mark Hansen writes: "For if vision does mark a massive expansion of exteriorization, we must remember that it does so not by breaking with touch, but rather by extending touch beyond the boundaries of the skin" (*Bodies in Code*, 79). Here Hansen's *doubleness* is clear, because as much as we are influenced by what we cannot access consciously, the worldly sensibilities are in turn influenced by what we perceive and sense. This effects and affects audience and performers alike. "Likewise if touch gives rise to interiority, it also—and for this very reason—inaugurates the relation to the outside constitutive for all exteriorazions" (79). This necessary shift still struggles to affect more established dance expressions. In order to further this shift, I insist that the speculative turn serves to inform, execute, and enhance thinking and doing within dance and its performance. In *The Nonhuman Turn,* Hansen states: "[T]he future *is already in the present*, not simply as a statistical likelihood, however reliable, but because each new concrescence is catalyzed into becoming by the superjectal intensity or real potentiality—the *future agency*—of the Universe itself!" (123). Hansen shares this idea with process choreographers. These choreographers and artists continue to explore that which cannot be explained or proven as actual. When visiting performances that allow the unknowable to exist, the participants, audience(s), and performer(s) are affected. This *affected-knowing*, as Patricia Clough insists, happens in each moment of the present and therefore creates a non-stagnant future.

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